

The Acts of the Apostles

“A study of the application of theology to the work of the church as a group”

Chapter Three

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The first recorded healing by the Apostles in the Church Era:

Acts 3:1 “Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer.

Acts 3:2 And a certain man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple.

Acts 3:3 And when he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms.

Acts 3:4 And Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze upon him and said, "Look at us!"

Acts 3:5 And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.

Acts 3:6 But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene-- walk!"

Acts 3:7 And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened.

Acts 3:8 And with a leap, he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

Acts 3:9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God;

Acts 3:10 and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.”

Psalm 55:17 mentions the three hours of prayer:

Psa 55:17 “Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur, And He will hear my voice.”

One of these hours was in the morning at the third hour, the second was at noon, the sixth hour, and the third was the ninth hour, which would be three p.m. The ninth hour was also the time of the evening sacrifice, which would be a time when the temple would be the most crowded. Verse two tells us that this routine of the crippled man was one that was done every day. The temple was the favorite place for beggars to assemble for the place would be crowded and the people coming there would be susceptible to showing their piety by giving to the poor and crippled. When we give so that other people will praise us for our giving we have our reward there. Our giving must be to God and it must be done in a humble way and certainly not to receive praise from people who see us give. For such reasons I think that we should not allow our names to be used associated with

our giving to the church. At Christmas time I often see lists of names of people who have given money to the needy and I also will see some gifts listed as given anonymously. You know which recognition I think is preferred. The Beautiful gate is inside the temple mount area and separated the Court of the Gentiles from the Court of the Women. Historians give us logical reasons why it was referred to as the Beautiful gate relating to its physical appearance. So the time and the place that the cripple was brought to this area for begging was designed to achieve the maximum results.

The Kingdom begins in wonder and continues as signs are given the apostles to demonstrate to the world that the Spirit of God has started the advent of the last days of the world and the Kingdom to come. The beggar addressed Peter and John with the hope of receiving some monetary gift but he received something that he probably had no thought that he might receive. Peter had nothing of this world to give the man, but he had something far greater in value. Peter was indwelt by the Holy Spirit and He knew the will of the Father and exercised the healing power of God upon the man. There were probably many such people as this crippled man in this area but the Sovereign God decided that this particular man should be healed. Peter went to the Temple for an hour of prayer. Peter and John did not go there looking for someone to heal. But the Holy Spirit caused Peter to fix his gaze upon the crippled man who was there to beg for material things to help him live in the world. But Peter saw a greater need and a greater way to give glory to God. In His earthly ministry Jesus could see that the Father had given faith to many people before He healed them and similarly Peter saw that this man had been chosen. As we will see in a few verses (3:16), Peter also had revealed to him that this man had been given the required faith by the Father. Peter and John had earlier been involved in healings for Jesus had given His disciples the power to heal earlier in His ministry:

Matt 10:1 “And having summoned His twelve disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.”

Peter told the man to look at them and when he did give them his attention Peter was then ready to act out the will of the Father to cause the man to be physically healed. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter told the man to walk. Note that Peter said that the healing was in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene. Peter was thus claiming the healing and the credit for the healing to be in the power of Jesus. Claiming the healing in this way meant that Peter was doing what Jesus would have done if He had physically been there at this time. Peter helped him up and the man’s limbs were healed so that he could then leap and walk with them. The man immediately walked with them into the Temple and began to praise God for the miracle. But Peter, unlike a modern “healer” was quick to pass the glory on to God as we will see.

The man instantaneously went from a total cripple needing to be carried to the place for begging into a man with the strength and coordination to be leaping and walking into the temple. He did not walk out of the temple into the streets. He went into the temple to

give praise to God. The Pharisees in the temple should have had a Scripture leap into their minds:

Isa 35:6 "Then the lame will leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb will shout for joy. For waters will break forth in the wilderness And streams in the Arabah."

All the people in the temple saw this man leaping and walking and probably most of them were well aware of who he was for he had been coming to this area of the temple to beg for many years. Remember that this man had been crippled since his birth and so the people were truly amazed to see this man that nobody, not even his mother, had ever seen even stand up by himself. Now this same man was leaping and walking in the temple praising God for his miraculous healing.

We now come to the Second Christian Sermon:

Acts 3:11 "And while he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement.

Acts 3:12 But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk?"

Acts 3:13 "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered up, and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him.

Acts 3:14 "But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you,

Acts 3:15 but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses.

Acts 3:16 "And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all."

The portico of Solomon was the porch surrounding the Court of the Gentiles. The healed man went to Peter and John and clung to them in joy and the people all ran together to them as they were amazed at what had happened. Peter understood that the people thought that he and John were the healers so he quickly passed the honor on to Jesus. Peter recognized his opportunity to preach the Gospel and point the people toward the Lord Jesus Christ. Such an action is so against our inward human need for praise for ourselves, but when we truly realize that we have died and that it is Christ that lives in us we are free to give all the glory to God.

Peter then went on to explain to them some facts about Jesus so nobody would have any misunderstanding about the person to whom he gave the glory. He starts back at Abraham, Isaac, and Joseph to make sure that they understand that he is talking about the God. God glorified Jesus and the people rejected Him, preferring a known murderer to be freed instead of Jesus, Who never harmed anyone. Let's read of this account as given to us by Luke.

*Luke 23:13 "And Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people,
Luke 23:14 and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him.
Luke 23:15 "No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him.
Luke 23:16 "I will therefore punish Him and release Him."
Luke 23:17 [Now he was obliged to release to them at the feast one prisoner.]
Luke 23:18 But they cried out all together, saying, "Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!"
Luke 23:19 (He was one who had been thrown into prison for a certain insurrection made in the city, and for murder.)
Luke 23:20 And Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again,
Luke 23:21 but they kept on calling out, saying, "Crucify, crucify Him!"
Luke 23:22 And he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilt demanding death; I will therefore punish Him and release Him."
Luke 23:23 But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified. And their voices began to prevail.
Luke 23:24 And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand should be granted.
Luke 23:25 And he released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus to their will."*

Peter then went on to tell them that God had resurrected Jesus and that he and John were witnesses of the resurrection. Peter then tells them in verse 16 that God used a gift of faith to heal the man. This faith is a God given gift, not a grunt and groan manifestation by people. Please read my article on Faith that is on LivingTheology.com for details about the faith that comes from God.

Peter then tells them that he knows that they acted in ignorance rather than causing the Son of God to die when they knew that He indeed was the Son of God.

Acts 3:17 "And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also.

It is one thing to act in ignorance against God but it is an entirely different story to act against God when one knows exactly what he is doing.

Luke 23:34 "But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves."

Heb 6:1 "Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

Heb 6:2 of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

Heb 6:3 And this we shall do, if God permits.

*Heb 6:4 For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit,
Heb 6:5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,
Heb 6:6 and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.
Heb 6:7 For ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God;
Heb 6:8 but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.”*

*2Peter 2:20 “For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.
2Peter 2:21 For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them.
2Peter 2:22 It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A dog returns to its own vomit," and, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.””*

Numbers chapter 15 also gives us the Old Testament similar teaching about the difference in judgment upon those with knowledge and those without knowledge. These are tough teachings but they all say that there is a different judgment for those who knowingly act against God and those who act against God in ignorance.

Peter then went on to tell them that regardless of what they had done God was going to accomplish His goal as He had foretold by the word of His prophets. It was necessary for the second Adam to live a righteous life and to die on the cross for the sins of His chosen people. Indeed Jesus did fulfill the plan of the Father.

Acts 3:18 "But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

Such Scriptures to which Peter is referring include Isa 53, Psalm 22, and

Zech 12:10 “And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born.”

Now Peter goes on to tell them what they must do:

**Acts 3:19 "Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;
Acts 3:20 and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you,**

Calling people to repent is, of course, not new in the history of God’s work in His creation.

Jer 8:4 "And you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord,' Do men fall and not get up again? Does one turn away and not repent?"

Jer 8:5 "Why then has this people, Jerusalem, Turned away in continual apostasy? They hold fast to deceit, They refuse to return."

Ezek 14:6 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God,' Repent and turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations."

2Kings 17:13 "Yet the Lord warned Israel and Judah, through all His prophets and every seer, saying, 'Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets.'"

2Kings 17:14 However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the Lord their God."

Jesus also began His ministry with the same command:

Matt 4:17 "From that time Jesus began to preach and say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

Repentance means to change one's mind and purpose but it does not just involve an intellectual decision. Repentance does not just involve feeling sorrow about what one has done. True repentance involves a change in behavior that lasts throughout our life even though we can fall back into sin we do not remain in sin ever again. Jesus told a story that demonstrates true repentance.

Matt 21:28 "But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go work today in the vineyard.'

Matt 21:29 "And he answered and said, 'I will, sir'; and he did not go.

Matt 21:30 "And he came to the second and said the same thing. But he answered and said, 'I will not'; yet he afterward regretted it and went.

Matt 21:31 "Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The latter." Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you that the tax-gatherers and harlots will get into the kingdom of God before you."

Not only did this second son regret his original decision, he also went and did what he was supposed to do.

There are at least four methods used by God that He designed to result in true repentance for His children¹.

1. Knowledge of His revealed truth

Luke 16:30 "But he said, 'No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!'"

Luke 16:31 "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.'"

The words of Moses and the Prophets refers to the Old Testament that these people had, but if they do not respond to that knowledge with repentance then there is no salvation for them. Of course only God's people recognize His truth in His Word and when they do hear His Word they do respond appropriately.

2. Sorrow in the world.

2Cor 7:9 "I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, in order that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.

2Cor 7:10 For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death."

Matt 5:4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

God lets us become sorrowful and mournful in spirit so that we will then recognize that we have no hope except through Jesus Christ. God gives us the faith that we can recognize our need and then we respond with true repentance.

3. God's goodness and kindness

Rom 2:4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

*Matt 5:44 "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you
Matt 5:45 in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."*

The sun and the rain symbolize the goodness of God. Those who have been given faith recognize that they do not deserve any of the goodness of God and that understanding drives them to repentance.

4. Fear of individual judgment

Acts 17:30 "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent,

Acts 17:31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

Having received faith from God (the enabling power of God) we recognize that we deserve condemnation and that Jesus one day will have a day in which He will judge the world in absolute righteous. We recognize that we should be called guilty and that faith

and knowledge leads us to true repentance. We who have faith cannot understand why any rational person would not run to Jesus for salvation from the wrath that will come from God in judgment. Of course those who do not have faith cannot see the truths of God as truth.

Part of verse 19 says “**that your sins may be wiped away**”. The word for “wiped” is interesting especially for a chemist! The ink used in these times had no acid content so that it did not penetrate the material on which it was used to write. Since there was no penetration of the ink, the words could easily be wiped away as though they were never there. That understanding of wiping away is exactly what God does with our sins that had been committed. They are wiped away as though they never existed!

Col 2:13 “And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,

Col 2:14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

All of these actions by God lead us to that great exclamation:

Rom 8:1 “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Now let’s look at some more meaning in verses 19-21.

Acts 3:19 "Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;

Acts 3:20 “and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you

Acts 3:21 whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.”

The “times of refreshing” have been promised by God for a long time. The word used for “times” refers to a specific time in history that is predestined by God and such a time has not yet come upon the earth. This will be a wonderful time.

Isa 11:6 “And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the kid, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them.

Isa 11:7 Also the cow and the bear will graze; Their young will lie down together; And the lion will eat straw like the ox.

Isa 11:8 And the nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den.

Isa 11:9 They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord As the waters cover the sea.

Isa 11:10 Then it will come about in that day That the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.”

This time is also described in Isaiah 35:1-10. This time will not come about because of the hard work of men in working toward peace in the world but it will come because of the work of Jesus Christ. Jesus also told us that we would not know when this time would come (Acts 1:7). Jesus will not come until a repentant Israel has Him as their King. The reader is referred to Zech 12:10-14:9) and the following:

Rom 11:25 "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in;

Rom 11:26 and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob."

This restoration of all things will result in a very different earth.

Joel 2:30 "And I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire, and columns of smoke.

Joel 2:31 "The sun will be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes."

God will then send blessings upon Israel that will replace the curses upon Israel due to their hardness of heart.

Joel 2:25 "Then I will make up to you for the years That the swarming locust has eaten, The creeping locust, the stripping locust, and the gnawing locust, My great army which I sent among you."

Acts 3:22 "Moses said, 'The Lord God shall raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed in everything He says to you.

Acts 3:23 'And it shall be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.'

Acts 3:24 "And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days.

Acts 3:25 "It is you who are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'

Acts 3:26 "For you first, God raised up His Servant, and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.'"

Peter ends his sermon with hope for the Jews in verses 25-26. God did indeed bring His word first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles.

Luke 24:45" Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,

Luke 24:46 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day;

Luke 24:47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

Peter did as God predicted in that he first proclaimed the work of Jesus to the Jews in this sermon. Then the Gospel would be proclaimed to the entire world and those who refused to embrace this truth would pay the consequences forever.

2Thes 1:6 “For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,

2Thes 1:7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,

2Thes 1:8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

2Thes 1:9 And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,”

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